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Elite athlete to high-performance coach in men's rugby union and soccer: a cohort longitudinal study

ICCE, 2015, Vierumaki, Finland

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Phenomena under investigation



Martin Johnson – Rugby Union



Ryan Giggs - Football



Context - literature

Elite coach pathways (Gilbert *et al.*, 2006, 2009; Irwin *et al.*, 2004; Nash & Sproule, 2009; Saiz *et al.*, 2009; Schinke *et al.*, 1995, Werthner & Trudel, 2009)

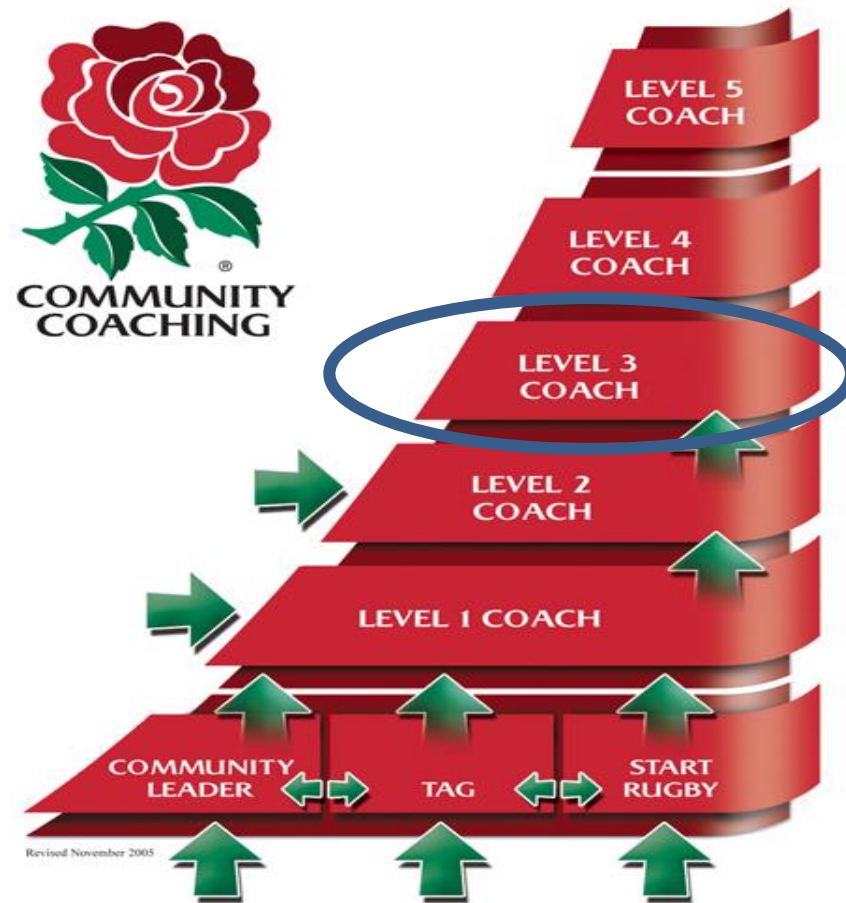
‘Fast-tracked’ (Rynne, 2014)

Socialisation into club culture (Blackett, Evans & Piggott, *in-press*)

Study design

- Longitudinal cohort design (Johnson, Plumridge & Holland, 2003)
 - Level 3 ‘senior professionals’ formal coach education qualification
 - 2x Semi-structured interviews, 10-12 months apart

COACHING STRUCTURE



COACHING PATHWAY

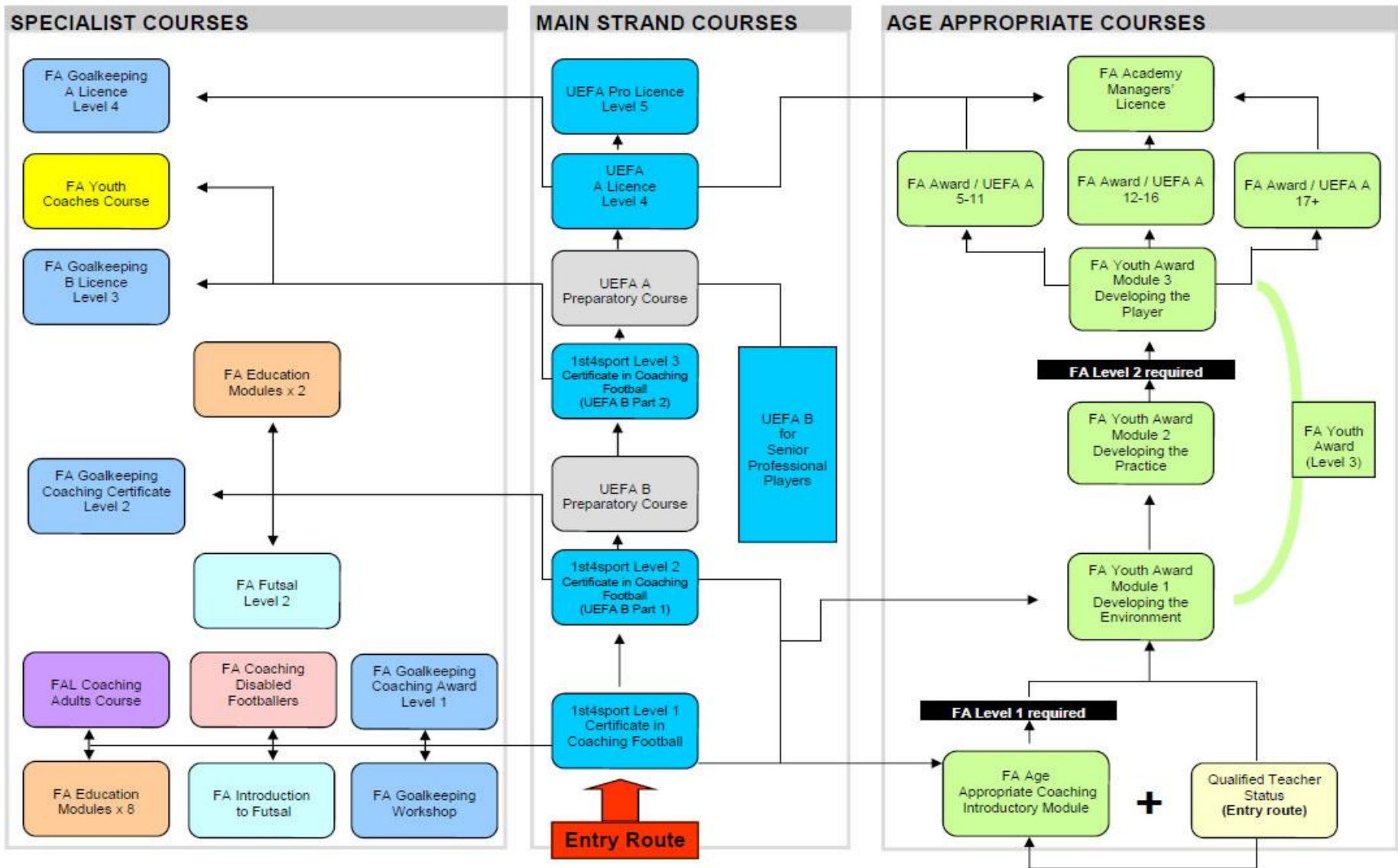
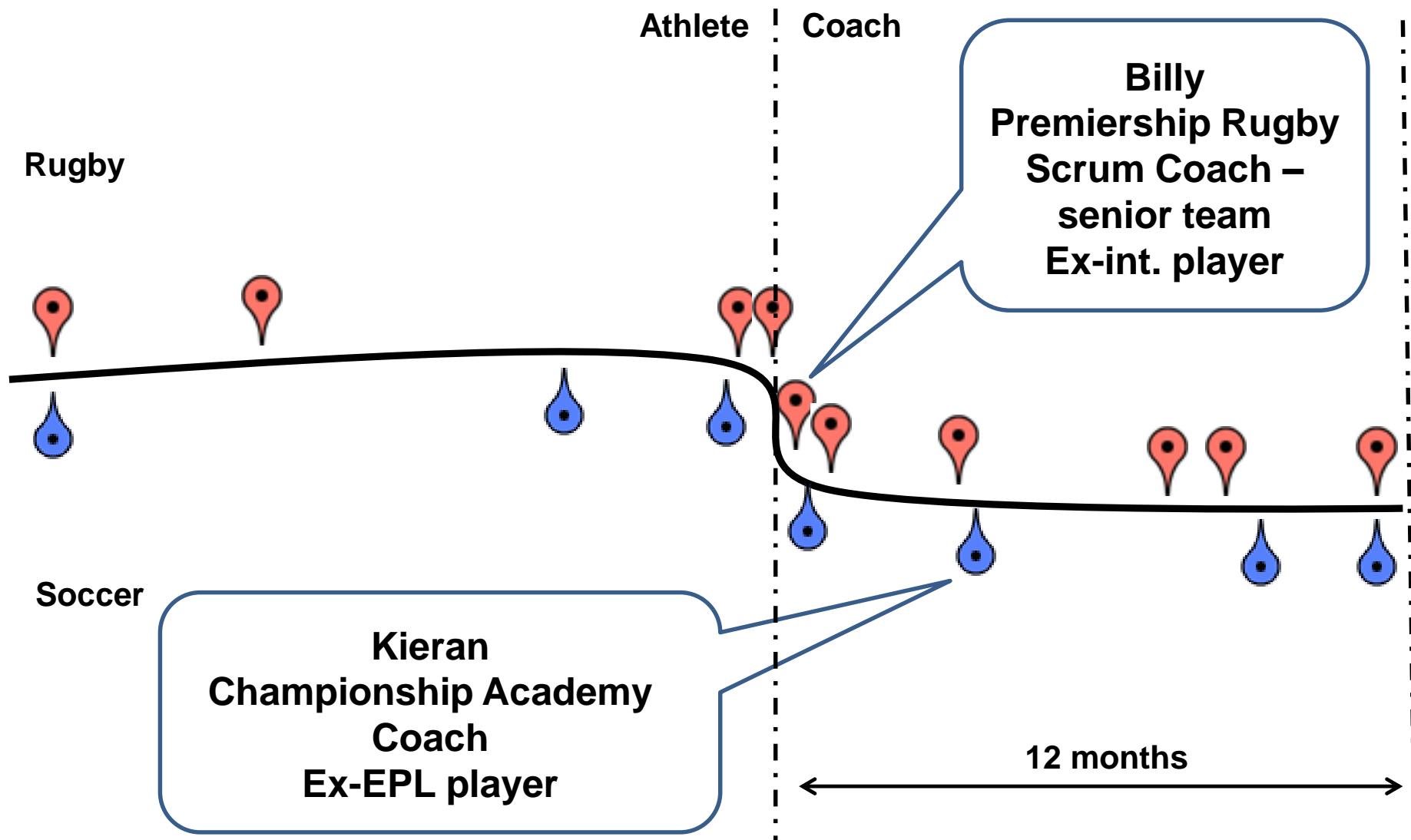


Figure 2. FA coach pathway (FA, 2015)

Sample characteristics



Results

Acculturation Process From Athlete To Coach

Transition Commencement

Output

Coaching Pathway Access Routes

**‘Aspirational’
or
‘Reluctant’**

Club values -
drawing athletes
through

Reflecting on a *Coaching* and *Playing* Philosophy

**Direct & Indirect
Coaching
Experiences**

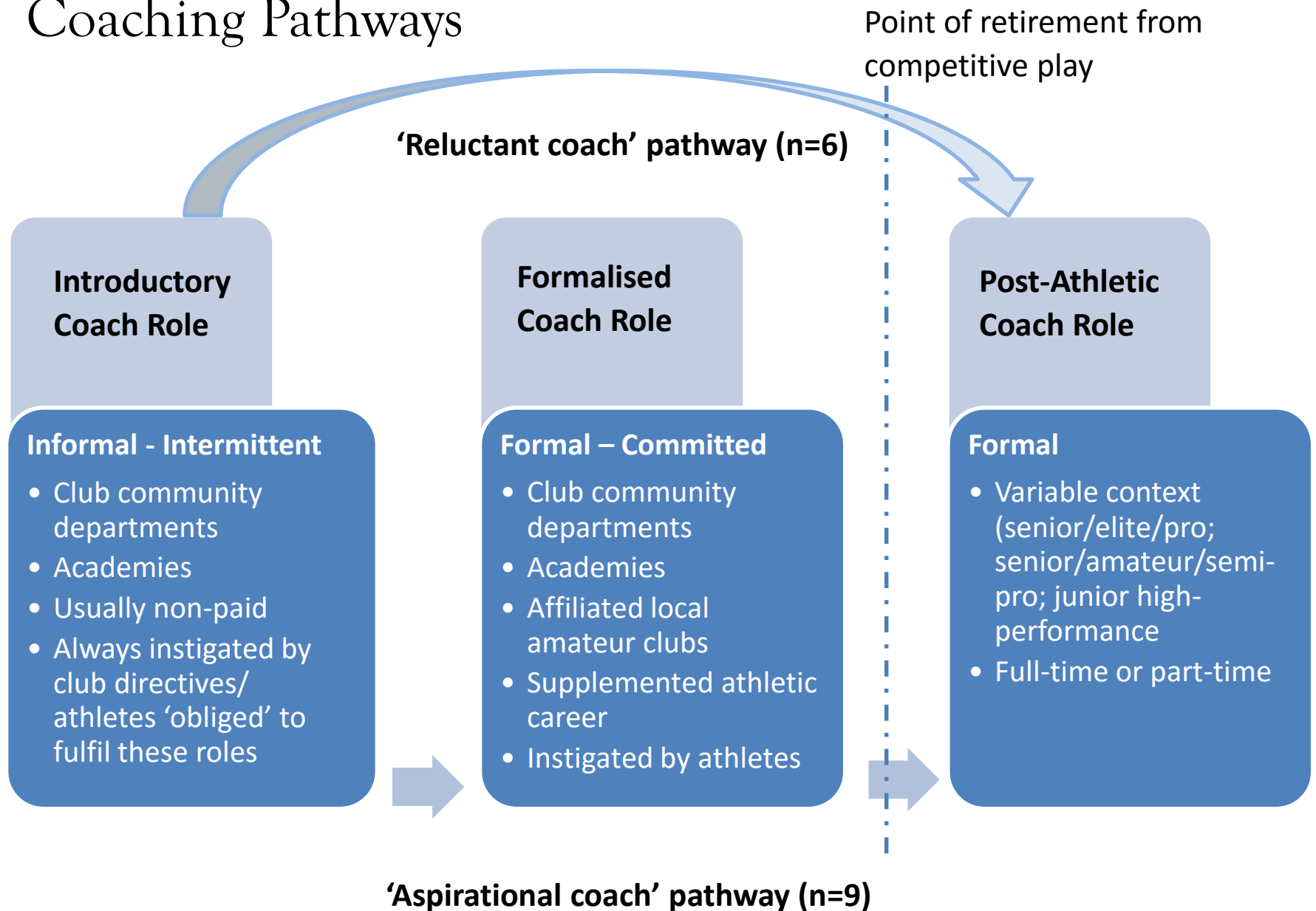
Significant
Others

Negotiation/ Consolidation of a Coach Identity

**Honest and True
to Personal
Values/Character**

Coaching Practice

Coaching Pathways



Discussion – Clubs drawing athletes through

13 / 15 participants attained their first coaching role with either their first (n=5) or last (n=8) club they represented as athletes

“Well I retired in the summer through injury, so May time, and (current Championship Football Club 1) have *offered*, well they *offered* me a coaching role, because my contract was expired with them...”
(Kieran, interview one)

Coaching & Playing Philosophies

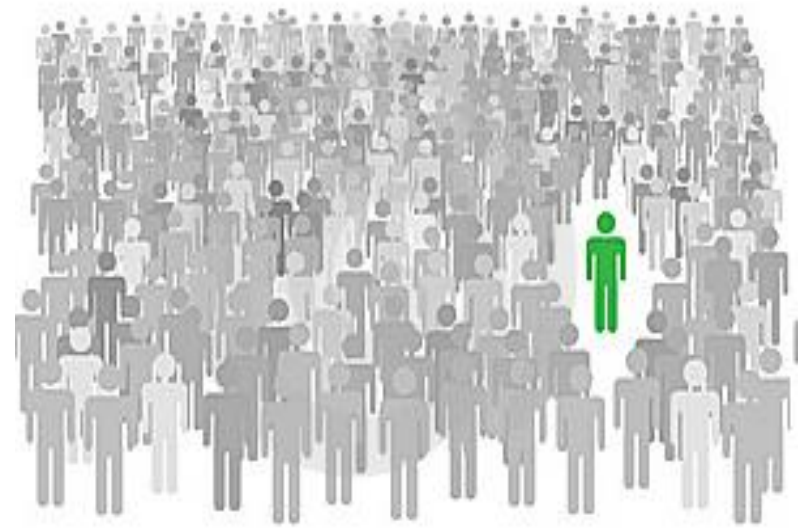
“I think a coaching philosophy is what *formation* is and or what team did I like playing in most and what way did I enjoy my football; and to be *honest*...”

“...I’ve watched games, I’ve watched the players, I’ve watched other managers’ philosophy, and I’ve looked at their principles in how they see the game.”

(Owen, interview one)

Discussion – Philosophical development

- Conflict between ‘club philosophy’ and ‘individual philosophy’



“It comes back to if I have to live a *front*, I have to carry on with that, so I can’t copy you the whole time and live like you or coach like you all of the time. I want to be *myself* so I don’t have to turn a switch on every time I come to training...” (Greg, interview two)

Discussion – Coach identity

“Players are smart, players will *see through you* if you aren’t *honest* with them...” (Conrad, interview one)

Knowledge of self the most important feature

Necessity of sustaining player respect
(Blackett, et al., 2015; Potrac, Jones & Armour, 2002)

Honesty – contrasts to Goffman’s presentation of self, impression management & front/façade (cf. Jones, 2006)



Future considerations...

- How much impact do structural mechanisms (e.g. ideological, cultural and political) have on individual coach development?
- How are coaching philosophies ‘negotiated’ over an extended period of time? – Balance between formal and informal mentors
- When does a coaching philosophy become a coaching ideology?

Theoretical Discussion (Bourdieu, 1977)

- Coaches = *arbiters of taste* when identifying playing talent (Christensen, 2009)
 - Arbiters of taste = the club hierarchy (Blackett et al., 2015, *Sport, Education & Society*)
 - Board members act as '*cultural custodians*' of club values when making head coaching appointments with the candidate being required to *embody* the club values = *Hexis*
 - Head coach appointments largely remain within the field and *in-house* which perpetuates a *fast-tracking* culture of appointing elite athletes to elite coaching positions
- = *Doxa* → *Symbolic Violence*
- (*the cultural norm*) → (discriminates - *BME & women?*)



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Thank you.

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